

2.2.2 Proposed Preferred Alternative B

Use of private lands for various purposes (e.g., hiking, mountain biking, horseback riding, camping, new trail development, trail rerouting, trail removal, commercial activities, and competitive events) would be at the discretion of the landowner. Where needed, acquisition of land from willing sellers and/or easements from willing grantors would be pursued, dependent on available funding. Activities on State land would be subject to California Code of Regulations. Activities on tribal lands would be subject to approval of the Agua Caliente Band of Cahuilla Indians. Trails on tribal lands would not be subject to the management prescriptions herein identified, but have been considered relative to trail connectivity and network viability.

Not all trails in the Santa Rosa and San Jacinto Mountains have been mapped. Thus, in order to encompass trails not mapped but where use may result in impacts to bighorn sheep, Seasonal Trail Areas were delineated. These Seasonal Trails Areas were derived using the bighorn sheep location database from the USFWS (updated October 2000). Using a geographic information system (GIS), these points were plotted on a map of the Santa Rosa and San Jacinto Mountains. Next, the critical habitat line was added with the known trails network and the planning area boundary. We examined the pattern of bighorn sheep data points and drew a line, inside critical habitat, encompassing the majority of bighorn locations. Areas excluded from the analysis include lands under Tribal ownership, peripheral trails along the urban interface, and trails above 4500 feet, the upper elevation provided by the USFWS habitat model for bighorn sheep. The Seasonal Trail Areas encompass a total of 135,617 acres within the Santa Rosa and San Jacinto Mountains National Monument. Although, designated critical habitat was initially used as the boundary of the Seasonal Trail Areas, which was changed to *essential* habitat. Critical habitat and essential habitat are both based on biological needs of a particular species or population but differs from a regulatory perspective. Essential habitat is an informative designation intended to provide scientific guidance to cooperating agencies and the public, whereas critical habitat is statutorily defined with implementing regulations that govern Federal agency activity. The two lines are very similar.

Some trails within the Seasonal Trail Areas would be designated open on a limited basis and included in the monitoring plan to study the impacts of trail use on bighorn sheep. The Trails Management Plan would be subject to annual evaluation and review by the Trails Management Committee. This committee would consist of agency, city, county, and local user group representatives. Information to be considered yearly would include spatial analysis of bighorn sheep habitat use patterns, total trail use, annual bighorn sheep survey results, and basic demographic information including annual recruitment, survival, sex ratios etc.

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I. TRAIL USE

Non-motorized activities would be prohibited in Seasonal Trail Areas from January 15 to June 30 except for the Art Smith Trail, which would be open Tuesdays and Sundays of each week and the Boo Hoff Trail, which would be open Saturday and Tuesdays of each week, during the non-peak lambing season (January 15-February 15 and May 1-June 30). In addition, certain trails would be posted as “closed” from July 1 through September 30 to ensure access to water by bighorn sheep and other wildlife (see table below for list of trails closed during the hot season).

Trails in Seasonal Trail Areas subject to closure January 15 – June 30

Seasonal Trail Areas and primary trails located therein subject to closure from January 15 to June 30:

(1) West of Snow Creek (5,584 acres)

no primary trails

(2) Snow Creek to Tramway Road (10,185 acres)

no primary trails

(3) West of Palm Springs (9,568 acres)

Skyline Trail (eastern trailhead is located at Desert Riders Park at the western terminus of the Museum Trail)

(4) Murray Hill complex to California Highway 74 (32,012 acres)

Eagle Canyon Trail

Goat Trails, except for connector to the Berns Trail

Clara Burgess Trail

Dry Wash Trail

Hahn Buena Vista Trail

Cathedral Canyon Trail, except for the two legs immediately adjacent to Cathedral City Cove

Dunn Road, except for the segment extending from Cathedral City Cove to the second BLM gate in Section 5, T5S, R5E

Art Smith Trail – *open 2 days/week (Tuesday and Sunday, January 15 – February 15 and May 1 – June 30).*

Schey Trail

(5) California Highway 74 to Martinez Canyon (49,645 acres)

Bear Creek Canyon Trail – *closed at the boundary of BLM-managed public lands and open in Section 13, T6S, R6E (immediately south of La Quinta Cove).*

Bear Creek Oasis Trail

Guadalupe Trail

Boo Hoff Trail- *open 2 days/week (Tuesday and Saturday, January 15 – February 15 and May 1 – June 30).*

(6) Martinez Canyon to Riverside/San Diego County line (35,711 acres)

no primary trails

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Trails Subject to Hot Season Closure – July 1 through September 30

Bear Creek Oasis Trail

Bear Creek Canyon Trail – closed at the boundary of BLM-managed public lands, and open in Section 13, T6S, R6E (immediately south of La Quinta Cove).

Carrizo Canyon Trail

Art Smith Trail

Guadalupe Trail

Un-named trails posted as “closed during July 1 – September 30”.

Seasonal Trail Area total: 142,705 acres (75% of designated critical habitat)

All other trails located within Seasonal Trail Areas, including those that have not been named, mapped or otherwise identified, would also be subject to closure from January 15 to June 30. (see Figure 2-12 for depiction of Seasonal Trail Areas, primary trails, essential bighorn habitat.

Modifications to Seasonal Trail Area boundaries may occur where new perimeter trails are proposed and topographic limitations and/or configuration of private lands constrain trail development outside of the Seasonal Trail Areas (see NEW TRAIL DEVELOPMENT).

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Trails not subject to the voluntary trail avoidance program and available for year-round use. All trail use within bighorn sheep habitat would be subject to monitoring to assess impacts of trail use on bighorn sheep.

East of Palm Canyon

Pacific Crest National Scenic Trail.
North Lykken Trail.
Museum Trail
South Lykken Trail
Picnic Table Trail (located east of the South Lykken Trail)

South Palm Springs

Araby Trail
Shannon Trail
Berns Trail
Garstin Trail
Henderson Trail
Alexander Trail
Goat Trails-connector to the Berns Trail only
Wild Horse Trail
Fern Canyon Trail
Vandeventer Trail
Andreas Hills
Palm Canyon Trail
Indian Potrero Trail
Potrero Canyon Trail

Cathedral City / Rancho Mirage

Dunn Road from Cathedral City Cove to the second BLM gate in Section 5, T5S, R5E
Two legs of the Cathedral Canyon Trail immediately adjacent to Cathedral City Cove
Bighorn Overlook Trail
Mirage Trail (Bump and Grind) below the flat overlook located at the approximate center of Section 24, T5S, R5E

Palm Desert

Eisenhower Mountain Trail (access through *The Living Desert*)

La Quinta

Segment of the Bear Creek Canyon Trail in Section 13, T6S, R6E (*north of the boundary of BLM-managed public lands*).

La Quinta Cove to Lake Cahuilla Connector Trail (*a.k.a. the Morrow Trail. Use levels and bighorn sheep distributions will be monitored.*

Southern Santa Rosa Mountains

Cactus Spring Trail
Martinez Canyon Trail

U.S. Forest Service lands

All trails in designated critical bighorn sheep habitat

Perimeter trail corridors and other locations

All new trails upon development (see NEW TRAIL DEVELOPMENT)

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Individuals would be requested to venture no more than 50 feet from center-line of trails on either side for purposes of resting, nature study, or other similar activities from **January 15 to June 30** in bighorn sheep habitat. Holders of permits issued for research and extended study (subject to NEPA and ESA review) would be exempt from this requirement.

Individuals would be required to obtain a free permit for use of the following trails from **October 1 through January 14:** , Bear Creek Canyon and Oasis Trails,, Cathedral Canyon, Skyline Trail, and North Lykken Trail. The self-issue permit and trailhead registers would be used to monitor trail use and adapt the trails management plan when necessary to ensure best management for recreation users, Peninsular Ranges bighorn sheep and other wildlife. The same permit system would be used to track cross-country recreational activities.

Use of the Art Smith Trail (including Dead Indian Canyon) and Boo Hoff Trail would require a free permit year-round. All trail use would be subject to monitoring to assess the impacts of trail use on bighorn sheep.

Outside bighorn sheep habitat in the Santa Rosa and San Jacinto Mountains, trails would be open year-round for non-motorized use subject to existing regulations.

IMPLEMENTATION – TRAIL USE

Implementation of Seasonal Trail Area closures would be phased in as new perimeter trails are constructed in identified corridors. Prior to completing any phase of new trail construction, the voluntary trail avoidance program as currently implemented for the adjacent Seasonal Trail Area would be continued (see *CURRENT MANAGEMENT: VOLUNTARY TRAIL AVOIDANCE PROGRAM* below). Priorities for new trail construction and the phase-in strategy for Seasonal Trail Area closures are described below.

Phase One

- Closures in Seasonal Trail Areas numbered above as 1, 2, 3, and 6 would be implemented annually from **January 15 to June 30** upon approval of the Coachella Valley Multiple Species Habitat Conservation Plan / Natural Communities Conservation Plan and prior to completion of any new perimeter trail
- P The Skyline Trail would be the only trail affected by this closure. There would be no primary trails affected in Seasonal Trail Areas 1, 2, or 6. The voluntary trail avoidance program in Seasonal Trail Areas 4 and 5 would continue as currently implemented.

Perimeter trail alignments – Phase One

- P Connector trail from northern terminus of North Lykken trail to the Pacific Crest Trail at Snow Creek.
- P Connector trail from northern terminus of North Lykken trail to the dike along Tramway Road and continuing up the alluvial fan bisected by Tramway Road. This trail is being developed cooperatively between the City of Palm Springs and the Agua Caliente Band of Cahuilla Indians. Alignment of this trail has been determined by the project coordinators.

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Phase Two

- The voluntary trail avoidance program in Seasonal Trail Areas 4 and 5 would continue as currently implemented pending completion of proposed perimeter trails.
- Closures in Seasonal Trail Area 4 would be implemented annually from **January 15 through June 30** upon completion of the proposed perimeter trails listed below.
- Hot season closures - Bear Creek Canyon Trail, Bear Creek Oasis Trail, and various unnamed posted trails closed during **July 1 – September 30** upon completion of proposed perimeter trails listed below.

Perimeter trail alignments – Phase Two

- P Santa Rosa and San Jacinto Mountains National Monument Visitor Center to the west ridge of Deep Canyon – trail would be constructed to avoid disturbance to captive population of bighorn sheep at the Bighorn Institute.
- P Santa Rosa and San Jacinto Mountains National Monument Visitor Center loop trail.
- P Homme-Adams Park loop trail and connector to the Mirage Trail

Phase Three

- Closure for Seasonal Trail Area 5 would be implemented annually from **January 15 to June 30** upon completion of the proposed perimeter trails listed below.

Perimeter trail alignments – Phase Three

- P West side of La Quinta Cove connecting existing bike path to north end of Cove.
- P Western flank of the Coral Reef Mountains from flood control access gate.
- P Avenue 58 south along perimeter of the Santa Rosa Mountains to Avenue 65 (Coral Mountain Regional Park is currently under development by the Coachella Valley Recreation and Parks District).

Phase Four

Perimeter trail alignments – Phase Four

- P Rimrock shopping center to and around Cathedral City Cove
 - From the northern terminus of the Goat Trails connector to Cathedral City Cove, generally flanking the flood control levee on both sides. The two existing legs of the Cathedral Canyon trail immediately adjacent to the Cove would be utilized.
- P Cathedral City Cove to Rancho Mirage
 - Along bighorn sheep fence alignment on the southeast side of Cathedral City Cove, not extending uphill of the flood control channel, except where the proposed trail would occur north of the bighorn exclusion fence.
 - East side of the Santa Rosa Wilderness Area from the southern terminus of the Coral Mountain Regional Park Trail to the mouth of Martinez Canyon.

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Additional Guidelines for Development of Perimeter Trails

- Seasonal Trail Area closures would be implemented as new trails are constructed.
 - Phase I and II would be concurrent.
 - Phase III and IV would occur sequentially and each would have a three-year window for construction of new perimeter trails.
 - Each phase of implementation would occur within three years
 - The Trails Management Committee would reassess development of specific perimeter trails if they have not been built at the end of three years.
 - Implementation would be subject to review by the Trails Management Committee.
 - Total phasing would not exceed nine years. All Seasonal Trail Area closures would be implemented no later than nine years after the plan is approved.
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- A multi-jurisdiction, multi-agency Sheep Ambassador/monitoring and outreach team would continue to provide outreach and education to trail users, and to request and monitor compliance with the voluntary avoidance program during implementation. The monitoring plan would be developed more fully in the Coachella Valley Multiple Species Habitat Conservation Plan and Natural Communities Conservation Plan.
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- Effectiveness of the trails management program would be reviewed annually by the Trails Management Committee, which would be made up of representatives for all signatories of the Coachella Valley Multiple Species Habitat Conservation Plan / Natural Communities Conservation Plan. Modifications to the program and/or implementation strategy would be undertaken upon mutual agreement of the Trails Management Committee.

Current management: Voluntary Trail Avoidance program

The Bureau of Land Management has requested that the public refrain from using the trails listed below to protect bighorn sheep during the lambing season, January 1 – June 30.

Art Smith Trail
Boo Hoff
Cathedral Canyon Trail
Bear Creek Canyon Trail
Bear Creek Oasis Trail
Guadalupe Trail
Morrow Trail
North Lykken Trail
Clara Burgess Trail
Dunn Road

II. CROSS-COUNTRY TRAVEL

- Cross-country travel would be prohibited in essential bighorn sheep habitat from **January 15 to September 30**, and allowed from **October 1 to January 14**.
- Outside bighorn sheep habitat in the Santa Rosa and San Jacinto Mountains, cross-country travel would be allowed year-round subject to existing regulations.
- Individuals would be required to obtain a free permit for use of the following trails from **October 1 through January 14**: Art Smith Trail (including Dead Indian Canyon), Bear Creek Canyon and Oasis Trails, Boo Hoff Trail (including the connector from Lake Cahuilla to La Quinta Cove – a.k.a. Morrow Trail), Cathedral Canyon, Skyline Trail, and North Lykken Trail from **October 1 through January 14**. The self-issue permit and trailhead registers would be used to monitor trail use and adapt the trails management plan when necessary to ensure best management for recreation users, Peninsular Ranges bighorn sheep and other wildlife. The same permit system would be used to track cross-country recreational activities.

III. CAMPING

- Camping would be prohibited in bighorn sheep habitat from **January 15 to September 30**, and allowed from **October 1 to January 14**.
- Campers would be required to obtain a free use permit at the Palm Springs BLM office, the Santa Rosa and San Jacinto Mountains National Monument Visitor Center, or other locations from **October 1 through January 14**. Information gathered through the permit system would aid in assessing numbers of campers per year in the Santa Rosa and San Jacinto Mountains.
- Camping would be prohibited within 1/4 mile of water sources to prevent disturbance to wildlife at these critical locations.
- Camping would be allowed outside bighorn sheep habitat in the Santa Rosa and San Jacinto Mountains subject to existing regulations.

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IV. DOGS

- Dogs would be allowed in designated areas only (see below).
- Dogs would be kept under restraint to ensure they do not roam freely. Leash restrictions would be enforced by city, state, and federal agencies.
- The following areas in bighorn sheep habitat would be approved for entry with dogs on leashes:
 - P West of Cathedral City Cove
 - P Homme-Adams Park and adjacent lands in Palm Desert.
 - P South of La Quinta Cove, outside of designated critical habitat but within essential habitat.
- Outside bighorn sheep habitat in the Southern Santa Rosa and San Jacinto Mountains, dogs would be subject to existing regulations.

Exceptions to the prohibition of dogs

Persons requiring accompaniment by a seeing-eye dog, and those using dogs to facilitate search and rescue or law enforcement operations are exempt from the prohibition.

V. NEW TRAIL DEVELOPMENT

New trails listed below would be developed within perimeter corridors (see “Implementation” under “Trail Use”) approved in this plan. Additional new trail development would be assessed on a case-by-case basis.

Guidelines for development of new perimeter trails

- P New perimeter trails would generally run parallel to and rise not more than 200 feet above the toe of slope.
- P New perimeter trails would not be constructed within 1/4 mile of water.
- P New perimeter trails would incorporate topographic variability where possible.
- P New perimeter trails would be available for year-round use.
- P The proposed new perimeter trail network is described in Section II – Implementation.
- P Construction of approved new perimeter trails would be allowed only between **July 1 and January 14.**
- Additional proposals for new perimeter trail development in the Santa Rosa and San Jacinto Mountains would be considered on a case-by-case basis using the criteria laid out in this plan.
- A new trail linking Deep Canyon and the west side of La Quinta Cove, connecting the cities of Palm Desert and La Quinta. Art Smith Trail in Palm Desert would be closed seasonally upon completion of this connector trail.
- Three alignments would be considered for the connector trail between La Quinta and Palm Desert. The preferred route will be identified via the Coachella Valley Multiple Species Habitat Conservation Plan/Natural Communities Conservation Plan.

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1. North of Eisenhower Mountain – trail would be open year round.
2. Between Eisenhower Mountain and Indio Mountain – trail would be open seasonally.
3. South of Indio Mountain between Indio Mountain and Coyote Canyon – trail would be closed from **January 15 through September 30.**

VI. TRAIL REROUTING

- Trails would be rerouted to protect sensitive resource values (e.g., cultural resources, wildlife habitat, soils).
- Identification of trails to be rerouted would be based on habitat use patterns, home range and distribution of bighorn sheep. Until sufficient data are available to identify meaningful and feasible trail reroutes, proposals regarding specific reroutes would be considered on a case-by-case basis.
- Trails would be re-routed around existing wildlife water sources, where feasible, to prevent disturbance to wildlife during the hot season.
- Construction of trail re-routes would occur only between **October 1 – January 14** within bighorn sheep habitat
- Rerouting of the Guadalupe Trail to avoid desert slender salamander habitat would be proposed upon locating salamander populations and determining level of trail use.
- Outside bighorn sheep habitat in the Santa Rosa and San Jacinto Mountains, proposals for trail reroutes would be addressed on a case-by-case basis.

VII. TRAIL DECOMMISSION AND REMOVAL

- Redundant trails in the Murray Hill Complex would be identified and removed. Redundant trails are identified as those serving the same or similar purpose as other trails (e.g., connecting the same two points) and providing the same or similar recreation experience. Secondary or tertiary braided trails and trail shortcuts would generally be considered redundant.
- Additional redundant trails would be identified using aerial photography and other methods.
- Redundant trails would be identified for permanent closure using the following criteria:
 - P Relocation would not be meaningful and feasible
 - P Seasonal restrictions could not be effectively monitored and enforced
 - P Recurring violations of trail closures have occurred.

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- Trail removal would occur only between **October 1 and January 14.**
- Consideration would be given to using redundant trails to separate potentially conflicting trail use (e.g. horseback riding and mountain biking).
- Outside essential bighorn sheep habitat in the Santa Rosa and San Jacinto Mountains, proposals to decommission and remove trails would be addressed on a case-by-case basis.

VII. MURRAY HILL FACILITIES

- Picnic tables and equestrian hitching posts at the summit of Murray Hill would be relocated outside the Seasonal Trail Area, but **could** be sited within bighorn sheep habitat.
- A new site for the facilities would be determined through coordination with affected interest groups and jurisdictions subsequent to approval of the Coachella Valley Multiple Species Habitat Conservation Plan / Natural Communities Conservation Plan. Relocation would be subject to the NEPA process and consultation with the USFWS.
- Relocation of picnic tables and equestrian hitching posts would be undertaken only during **October 1 – January 14.**

IX. NONCOMMERCIAL, NONCOMPETITIVE ORGANIZED GROUP ACTIVITIES

- Noncommercial, noncompetitive organized groups would be prohibited in Seasonal Trail Areas from **January 15 through June 30**, and on certain trails under hot season closures **July 1 through September 30.**
- Noncommercial, noncompetitive organized groups of 10 to 24 individuals would be required to obtain a free use permit for activities in bighorn sheep habitat throughout the entire year. Permits would be available at the Palm Springs BLM office, the Santa Rosa and San Jacinto Mountains National Monument Visitor Center, and other locations.
- All non-commercial, non-competitive groups of more than 25 individuals using BLM-managed lands would be required to obtain a Special Recreation Permit *except for when exemptions apply (see glossary).*
- When entering the Santa Rosa Wilderness, noncommercial, noncompetitive organized groups of 16 to 24 individuals would be required to break into groups with no more than 15 individuals in any one group, and attempt to maintain at least 1/2-mile separation between groups.
- *Special Recreation Permits* would be issued through existing BLM regulatory processes, including compliance with NEPA and the Endangered Species Act. Compliance with stipulations developed by the BLM and in consultation with USFWS would be mandatory.

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- All permits would be issued only for use of trails and areas where and when the Seasonal Trail Area closure, the seasonal cross-country prohibition, or the voluntary trail avoidance program are not in effect.
- Noncommercial, noncompetitive organized groups using State lands would be subject to the California Code of Regulations.
- Outside bighorn sheep habitat in the Santa Rosa and San Jacinto Mountains, noncommercial, noncompetitive organized group activities could be allowed, subject to permission of private landowners, and approval through state or federal regulatory permitting processes, where applicable.

X. NON-MOTORIZED COMMERCIAL RECREATION ACTIVITIES

- Non-motorized commercial recreation activities would be prohibited in Seasonal Trail Areas from **January 15 to June 30** and on certain trails under hot season closures from **July 1 through September 30**.
- Non-motorized commercial recreation activities would be permitted in the remainder of bighorn sheep habitat where and when the voluntary trail avoidance program does not apply, subject to permission of private landowners and approval through regulatory permitting processes.
- A *Special Recreation Permit* would be required, except in circumstances when exemptions apply (see glossary), for non-motorized commercial recreation activities on BLM-managed lands, including vending associated with recreational use.
- *Special Recreation Permits* for use of BLM-managed lands would be issued through existing BLM regulatory processes (including compliance with NEPA and ESA).

XI. MOTORIZED COMMERCIAL RECREATION ACTIVITIES

- Motorized commercial recreation activities would be prohibited year-round in bighorn sheep habitat, except on a portion of Dunn Road, subject to permission from private landowners.

Dunn Road

- P Motorized commercial recreation activities between Pinyon Flats and the common boundary of Sections 32 and 3, T5S, R5E, would be considered on a case-by-case basis and allowed only from **October 1 to January 14**.
- P Motorized commercial recreation activities would be subject to approval through regulatory permitting processes (including compliance with NEPA and ESA), including issuance of a *special recreation permit* by BLM for use of BLM-managed portions of Dunn Road.
- P Motorized commercial recreation activities on the portion of Dunn Road from Cathedral City Cove to the common boundary of Sections 32 and 33 would be prohibited year-round.

Martinez Canyon Cherry Stem Road

P Motorized commercial recreation activities would be prohibited year round.

XII. COMPETITIVE RECREATION EVENTS

- Competitive recreation events would be prohibited year-round in essential bighorn sheep habitat on BLM-managed public lands in the Santa Rosa and San Jacinto Mountains.
- A *special recreation permit* would be required for competitive recreation use of BLM-managed public lands outside essential bighorn sheep habitat in the Santa Rosa and San Jacinto Mountains.

XIII. PUBLIC OUTREACH AND ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION

- An information and education program addressing all management prescriptions herein described, upon approval, would be implemented.
- Guided hikes during the fall season would be undertaken by BLM in partnership with local jurisdictions and user groups to provide outreach and education.
- The lower portion of Dead Indian Canyon contains a prehistoric archaeological site that would lend itself well to interpretation and public education. The site lies approximately 0.75 miles west of the levee and consists of several grinding "slicks" and a bedrock mortar. A dense stand of mesquite lies directly across the wash from the site. This, and the diversity of other plants in the area, provides the opportunity for a discussion of Cahuilla subsistence practices and use of native plants.
- Outreach and education would not be limited to bighorn sheep ecology but would include desert ecology in general.
- Viewing areas would be established so that the public can view bighorn sheep and other wildlife from a distance. These areas would be located to prevent disturbance to the animals.